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SUBJ: BIO: PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES: NGUYEN VAN THIEU AND NGUYEN CAO KY

REF: A) SAIGON 76 B) SAIGON 154

1. NGUYEN VAN THIEU IS A 44-YEAR-OLD SOUTH CENTRAL CATHOLIC, ARVN LT. GENERAL WHO HAS SERVED AS CHIEF OF STATE SINCE JUNE 1965. NGUYEN CAO KEY IS A 37-YEAR-OLD NORTHERN BUDDHIST VNAF AIR VICE MARSHAL (MAJOR GENERAL) WHO HAS SERVED AS PREMIER SINCE JUNE 1965.

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2. GENERAL THIEU WAS BO
C IN PHAN RANG, NINH THUAN PROVINCE, IN THE EXTREME SOUTHER PART OF CENTRAL VIET-NAM. HE WAS RAISED AS A BUDDHIST BUT CONVERTED TO CATHOLICISM WHEN HE MARRIED (HIS WIFE IS CATHOLIC). THIEU ATTENDED PRIMARY SCHOOL IN NINH THUAN AND SECONDARY SCHOOL IN SAIGON AND HUE, RECEIVING A FRENCH FIRST BACCALAUREATE. HE HAS BEEN IN THE ARMY SINCE 1948, SERVING IN BOTH COMMAND AND STAFF POSITIONS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF VIET-NAM AND RECEIVING SOME TRAINING IN THE UNITED STATES.

3. AS COMMANDER OF THE 5TH DIVISION IN NOVEMBER 1963 THIEU SUPPORTED THE COUP AGAINST DIEM, AFTER WHICH HE WAS PROMOTED TO BRIGADIER GENERAL AND NAMED TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE MILITARY REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL HE SUPPORTED THE NGUYEN KHANH COUP OF JANUARY 1964 AND BECAME CHIEF OF THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF AND SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE MRC UNTIL SEPTEMBER, WHEN KHANH REMOVED HIM ON SUSPICION OF COUP PLOTTING AND MADE HIM COMMANDER OF IV CORPS. FROM JANUARY TO JUNE 1965 HE WAS SECOND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, LATER VICE PREMIER IN CHARGE OF ARMED

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FORCES, AS WELL AS CHAIRMAN OF THE ARMED FORCES COUNCIL. IN JUNE 1965 HE WAS ONE OF 10 GENERALS WHO TOOK OVER THE GOVERNMENT FOLLOWING A DEADLOCK BETWEEN CHIEF OF STATE PHAN KHAC SUU AND PREMIER PHAN HUY QUAT, AND HE WAS NAMED CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE, OR DIRECTORY, IN WHICH POSITION HE HAS FUNCTIONED AS CHIEF OF STATE.

4. GENERAL KY WAS BORN IN SEPTEMBER 1930 IN SON TAY, NEAR HANOI. HE ATTENDED SECONDARY SCHOOL IN HANOI AND WAS AMONG THE FIRST CLASS OF EDUCATED VIETNAMESE CALLED INTO MILITARY SERVICE AS RESERVE OFFICERS IN 1951. HE ATTENDED NAM DINH MILITARY ACADEMY IN 1951-52; TODAY HE IS CHAIRMAN OF THE NAM DINH-THU DUC 1952 ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, A GROUP WHICH INCLUDES SEVERAL OTHER HIGH-RANKING OFFICERS AS WELL AS THE SECOND AND THIRD LEVEL COMMANDERS LOOSELY DESCRIBED AS THE BABY TURKS.

5. BEGINNING IN 1954 KY ROSE STEADILY THROUGH THE RANKS OF THE AIR FORCE, AND HE BECAME ITS COMMANDER IN DECEMBER 1963 PARTLY AS A RESULT OF HIS SUPPORT FOR THE ANTI-DIEM

COUP. DURING THE REGIMES OF NGUYEN KHANH, TRAN VAN HUONG AND PHAN HUY QUAT, KY'S CONTROL OF THE AIR FORCE GAVE HIM A MAJOR VOICE ON WHETHER OR NOT COUP ATTEMPTS WOULD SUCCEED. IN GENERAL KY USED HIS INFLUENCE TO DISCOURAGE COUPS BUT TO PUSH THE GOVERNMENT IN POWER TOWARD STONGER ACTION AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS AND FOR THE RESOLUTION OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS. KY JOINED THIEU AND EIGHT OTHER GENERALS IN TAKING OVER THE GOVERNMENT IN JUNE 1965; HE WAS SELECTED AS CHAIRMAN OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, OR CABINET, AND HAS FUNCTIONED AS PRIME MINISTER SINCE THEN.

6. FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS THIEU AND KY HAVE BEEN THE SINGLE TWO MOST POWERFUL FIGURES IN THE GOVERNMENT, BUT MAJOR DECISIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY THE DIRECTORATE, SOMETIMES WITH THE ENDORSEMENT OF THE ARMED FORCES COUNCIL. THE GOVERNMENT HAS SUCCEEDED IN DEFEATING THE STRUGGLE MOVEMENT OF THE MILITANT BUDDHISTS, DISCOURAGING TENDENCIES TOWARD WARLORDISM AMONG CORPS COMMANDERS, BRING INFLATION UNDER SOME CONTROL, IMPROVING VIET-NAM'S INTERNATIONAL POSTURE, AND

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DEVELOPING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS. IN GENERAL PREMIER KY HAS BEEN THE MORE VISIBLE OF THE TWO, WHILE CHAIRMAN THIEU HAS REMAINED IN THE BACKGROUND.

7. THERE WAS A LOW-LEVEL RIVALRY BETWEEN THIEU AND KY FOR SEVERAL MONTHS EARLY IN 1967 AS THEY JOCKEYED FOR POSITION, ALTHOUGH EACH DEFERRED TO THE OTHER'S AMBITIONS IN PUBLIC. THIS BEGAN TO ASSUME MORE SIGNIFICANT PROPORTIONS IN MAY AND JUNE WHEN BOTH ANNOUNCED THEIR CANDIDACIES, CHOSE RUNNING MATES, AND ACTUALLY FILED THEIR PAPERS OF CANDIDACY. IN THE LAST WEEK BEFORE THE CLOSE OF FILING, HOWEVER, THE LEADING GENERALS BROUGHT THE TWO TOGETHER AND INSISTED THAT THEY MUST REACH AN UNDERSTANDING FOR THE SAKE OF STABILITY AND MILITARY UNITY. ULTIMATELY, KY DEFERRED TO THE OLDER AND HIGHER-RANKING THIEU AND AGREED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE RACE AND TAKE SECOND PLACE ON THIEU'S TICKET.

8. THIEU AND KY ARE EXPECTED TO CAMPAIGN ON THEIR RECORD OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS IN POWER.

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